



Democratic Services Service Delivery Plan 2025 to 2026

Overview of the Service

The service aims to provide effective and high-quality electoral registration, conduct elections, manage committee administration, and support members. Additionally, the service aims to promote community engagement by enhancing understanding of the Council's democratic processes.

Democratic Services covers the following functions:

- Committee administration, along with procedural advice and guidance
- Member support, which encompasses members' allowances, representation on outside bodies, maintenance of registers of members' interests, and the publication of agendas, minutes, and member information on the Council's website
- Induction, training, and development for members
- Electoral registration
- Conducting elections

Most of the service's activities are defined by legislation and guided by statutory and non-statutory frameworks. These activities involve collaboration with a wide range of internal and external partners. This includes councillors, lead officers, service leads, report authors for committees, as well as organisations such as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), the Cabinet Office, the Electoral Commission, the County Council, neighbouring councils, parish councils, the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP), the Local Government Association (LGA), the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO), and the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA).

The committee and member support service is essential for the smooth functioning of the full Council and its committees. It offers efficient and professional meeting support, which includes administrative assistance, guidance, advice, and training for both councillors and officers regarding all aspects of the democratic process. This responsibility was enhanced in October 2015 when the Democratic Services and Elections Manager (DSEM) was appointed Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO). The DMO focuses explicitly on providing procedural information and advice and maintaining and updating the Constitution.

Following establishing the Council's trading companies, the team provides clerking services for the ECTC and ECSS Boards and their associated bodies. These services operate under Company Law and are separate from the Council's governance processes, and they are provided on a rechargeable basis. Additionally, the team offers clerking for the Kennett Garden Village Delivery Board. Careful attention is paid to maintaining a clear distinction between the roles of the Boards and the Council and their respective shareholder functions.

Following the retirement of the long-serving Democratic Services Manager, the Senior Democratic Services Officer was successfully appointed as Democratic Services and Elections Manager through an external recruitment process. Subsequently, the departure of the Electoral Services Officer led to the transfer of the Trainee Democratic Services Officer into the Electoral Services team in a trainee capacity, creating two vacancies within Democratic Services.

To maintain service continuity, an agency Senior Democratic Services Officer was appointed on an interim basis. Following further recruitment efforts, both vacant positions were successfully filled. However, the trainee has since left the team, prompting a new round of recruitment. A successful candidate is now in the onboarding process, ensuring the team is fully staffed and can focus on key priorities.

One of the team's ongoing initiatives is to reduce paper usage and work towards a more sustainable, paperless approach for meetings. Research into best practices and digital solutions is being conducted, and input will be requested from both members and officers to support a more efficient and environmentally friendly way of working.

In November, the formation of a new political group triggered a requisition for an Extraordinary Council meeting to review proportionality. This created a highly unusual scenario, with each political group holding an equal number of seats. Managing this situation required additional work, including extensive discussions, detailed research, and consultation with external legal advisors.

The government published the English Devolution White Paper in December, introducing policy developments requiring ongoing analysis and engagement. This will impact the team's workload long-term as we assess its implications for governance and local decision-making.

Additionally, receiving the Local Government Reorganisation letter has necessitated further preparations, including organising a Special Council meeting in March 2025. This will be a key milestone in shaping the Council's future structure and responsibilities.

The team remains committed to ensuring the smooth operation of democratic processes while adapting to these evolving challenges.

The Electoral Services team has had a hectic year, with an unprecedented number of elections taking place: a snap General Election (In addition, the timing of the snap UK Parliamentary election resulted in a significant increase in workload levels due to the

massive increase in applications before the election for absent voters, Voter Authority Certificates and overseas electors), the Police and Crime Commissioner Election, a District By-Election, four Parish By-Elections, and four Neighbourhood Plan Referendums. These have all been managed alongside the annual electoral registration canvass and European Citizens' franchise status changes.

The Elections Act 2022 received Royal Assent in April 2022 and has led to significant changes in the registration and election processes, which have been implemented in phases since January 2023. The first change to take effect was the introduction of voter identification, requiring photo ID to vote at a polling station in the May 2023 elections.

Preparations are underway for the upcoming combined election, including the County Council elections and the combined authority mayoral election in May. Notably, legislation has changed the voting system for the mayoral election to a 'first past the post' system, moving away from the previously used proportional representation system. Additionally, the team expects to conduct three or more Neighbourhood Plan Referendums in 2025 and early 2026, along with any necessary by-elections that may arise in the upcoming year.

Additionally, with the implementation of the Elections Act 2022 and subsequent secondary legislation, Electoral Services will oversee the transition to postal vote renewals. Starting in January 2026, the renewal period will change from five to three years. This adjustment will result in approximately 4,500 renewal notices and an expected number of renewals to process.

Cost of service

The cost to run the service from 2025 to 2027 totals £736,686 per annum, including staffing costs. This is broken down as follows:

- members' and committee support - £706,964
- electoral services - £50,644

Key areas of expenditure in these budgets are:

- members allowances - £ 329,519
- member training - £4,722
- members ICT - £7,000
- electoral registration - £50,644
- elections - £22,500

The costs of external elections are recharged to the relevant body. A sum of £22,500 is put into an election reserve each year to cover the cost of district council elections, which take place every four years. Any district council by-election is an additional cost to this Council.

Staffing Information

The service currently comprises six staff:

Democratic Services and Elections Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer (DSEM & DMO)

Senior Democratic Services Officer (SDSO)

Trainee Democratic Services Officer (DSO) – Due to start shortly

Electoral Services Team Leader (ESTL)

Electoral Services Officer (ESO)

Trainee Electoral Services Officer (ESO)

Planning for Councillors

Proposed item	Proposed date of decision	Committee
Half-year report 2025 to 2026	November 2025	Finance and Assets
End of year report 2025 to 2026	March 2026	Finance and Assets
Service Delivery Plan 2026 to 2027	March 2026	Finance and Assets

Democratic Services Service Delivery Plan 2025 to 2026

This Service Delivery Plan describes what Democratic Services will do to achieve continuous improvement (service objective). Each performance measure relates to the Council’s strategic outcomes and Corporate Plan for 2023 to 2027.

Council’s Strategic Outcome: Customers are at the heart of everything we do.

Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective: Provide effective, high-quality, legally compliant committee and member support services.

Link to Corporate Plan: Sound financial management. Sustainable communities.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2024 to 2025	Owner and co-owners
Publish agenda for Regulatory Committees within five clear days of a meeting (statutory) Publish agenda for Council, Policy Committees and Audit Committee within seven clear days of a meeting	100%, annually	100%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager
Publish decision lists for Council/Committees within three working days of a meeting	100%, annually	100%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager
Publish draft minutes for Council/Committees within 14 working days of a meeting	85%, annually	100%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager

Council’s Strategic Outcome: Customers are at the heart of everything we do.

Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective is to provide legal, efficient, and cost-effective elections for the district's electors and our external partners.

Link to Corporate Plan: Sound financial management. Sustainable communities.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2024 to 2025	Owner and co-owners
Review customer feedback forms/information from the election and resolve, as far as practicable, issues by the commencement of the next election period	90% of all customer feedback actioned (where possible) by the commencement of the next Election period annually	100%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager Electoral Services Team Leader

Council’s Strategic Outcome: Safe, vibrant and inclusive communities. Community sustainability.

Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective: Publish and maintain an accurate and legally compliant electoral register each year and maximise registration for target groups within the district.

Link to Corporate Plan: Sound financial management. Sustainable communities.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2024 to 2025	Owner and co-owners
Achieve at least an 85% registration rate for Route 2 forms	85%, annually	89.1%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager Electoral Services Team Leader
Number of electors registering electronically via government portal	At least 7,000 to be registered, annually	10,440 registered	Democratic Services & Elections Manager Electoral Services Team Leader

Council’s Strategic Outcome: Safe, vibrant and inclusive communities. Community sustainability.

Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective: Promote community engagement and involvement in the democratic processes of the Council.

Link to Corporate Plan: Sustainable Communities.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2024 to 2025	Owner and co-owners
Publication of agendas on the website on the day of despatch	100%, annually	100%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager

Council’s Strategic Outcome: Be an excellent employer.

Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective: Ensure continual professional development of staff and councillors.

Link to Corporate Plan: Sound financial management. Sustainable communities.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2024 – 2025	Owner and co-owners
Prepare, agree and implement member Induction, training and development programmes and member seminar sessions to provide members with the required knowledge and skills to perform their role as a district councillor effectively	10 Member seminar/training sessions, annually	Baseline 2024/25 (no District Elections) 1 Member Induction session, 9 Member training sessions and 8 Member seminar sessions held.	Democratic Services & Elections Manager

Council’s Strategic Outcome: Be an excellent employer.

Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective is to ensure that the Council’s corporate risks are managed effectively and mitigations are put in place to reduce impact.

Link to Corporate Plan: Sound financial management. Sustainable communities.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2024 – 2025	Owner and co-owners
Regularly review higher-level corporate risks, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">changes to the political composition of the Council affecting the democratic decision-making processeslocal, regional and national legislative and policy changes affecting the democratic process, both in terms of electoral administration/elections and democratic decision-makingimpact of corporate initiatives, such as shared services commercialisation, on the working practices of the team	100%, annually	Reviews of Constitution, Political Proportionality and Committee Structure. Conduct local elections/referenda. Offering services of the team on a commercial basis: <ul style="list-style-type: none">clerking of ECTC & ECSS Boardsclerking of Kennett Garden Village Delivery Board Conduct PDR/CGR.	Democratic Services & Elections Manager Electoral Services Team Leader

Council’s Strategic Outcome: A clean, green and attractive place.

Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective: Reduce paper usage via greater use/uptake of electronic solutions.

Link to Corporate Plan: Cleaner, greener East Cambridgeshire.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2024 – 2025	Owner and co-owners
Encourage and facilitate a new intake of councillors’ usage of electronic means to access and receive Council information/agendas	25% of councillors to receive agendas via electronic means annually	17.86% all electronic 21.43% partial electronic	Democratic Services & Elections Manager
Encourage more significant usage of electronic means of response/communication by/with electors, canvass and elections staff on electoral registration and elections matters, where possible	% Elector communications via electronic means, annually: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Route 2 Canvass/Electoral Registration - 75%Using E-mail as the preferred method of contact for Election correspondence - 60%	Route 2 - Canvass/Electoral Registration via electronic means - 75% Elector Communication via email – 65.5%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager Electoral Services Team Leader
Democratic Services staff to actively seek to reduce paper usage via electronic solutions	Corporate Target, annually: 10% paper reduction per Service Area 2023/24	+4.36%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager